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22 November 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR GENERAL TAYLOR

SUBJECT: SNIE on the Soviets Strategic Military Posture 1961-67

1. The special NIE requested by Mr. Bundy has cleared the USIB and is attached. The important parts have been red-lined and as I look back through the text, I find that much of it is so marked. Because of the relevancy of this material to the budget discussions, some people may try to use it at Hyannisport on Friday.

2. Most of the estimate tells us what we already know:

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In non-strategic fields the Soviets are emphasizing modern weapons, fire power and mobility. Finally, the intelligence people believe the Soviets intend to use their forces more to prevent war than to wage war.

3. There are some new facets to this estimate:

a. Information continues to pile up that the Soviets are giving the highest priority to R&D on a defense against ballistic missiles and that they are making steady progress in this area.

b. Our analysis of the recent Soviet nuclear tests show that they are ahead of us in some fields of nuclear technology and that their weight/yield ratio is such that they may now be able to deliver by missile a 25 megaton warhead, and soon may be able to deliver 100 MT. (Parenthetically, the one place where Soviet strategy seems to differ from ours is that while we are concentrating on missiles with higher accuracy and lower yield, the Soviets may be choosing to emphasize larger yields).

c. Economic and political factors, together with improved nuclear capabilities, are estimated to persuade the Soviets at some point to revert to the military manpower reductions begun in 1960.

d. Although it is conceivable that the Soviets by the mid 1960's will believe that their forces can be used in local military actions without excessive risks, the intelligence community believes the USSR is unlikely to adopt such a course as a matter of general policy, because of the risks involved, and particularly because of their increasing opportunities to advance their course by non-military means.

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